

# STRATEGIC PLAN



**International Boundary and Water Commission  
United States and Mexico  
United States Section**



## International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico United States Section

December, 2000

### United States Section Stakeholders and Staff Members:

I am pleased to share with you the Strategic Plan of the United States Section, International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC). The Plan will serve as a blueprint to be followed in developing a vital, highly competent organization dedicated to shaping the United States Section's future as the premiere federal agency responsible for addressing pertinent technical transboundary management issues in the United States - Mexico border region. The USIBWC Strategic Plan is in consonance with the results-oriented government reinvention efforts of the Administration and Congress, to include provisions of the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. Our commitment through strategic planning is not only to conform with the law but also to the spirit of improving program performance and being accountable to our stakeholders.

Substantial resources have been invested in developing the Strategic Plan. However, the document presented in the following pages merely represents one major phase of a continuous circular process of program evaluation, adjustments, and reporting. I have assigned the leadership role to members of the USIBWC Executive Leadership Team to ensure a coordinated and effective implementation of the Strategic Plan. Each strategic goal leader will continue to be supported by a team of personnel from all levels of the organization. Of utmost importance is the maintenance of a vital link between the Strategic Plan and all substantive decisions made by the USIBWC staff. We have as an underlying goal while carrying out the Plan the convergence of our strategic planning efforts into the budget process. This will help ensure full accountability to our stakeholders. We will measure our success in achieving accountability through the development and implementation of performance plans and reports.

The current USIBWC Strategic Plan reflects a global emphasis on issues and opportunities that are aligned directly with our unique mission. We look forward to enlisting the active involvement of our stakeholders in helping us develop and carry out strategies not only for planning our future, but *creating* our future.

John M. Bernal  
United States Commissioner

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## Vision Statement

*The United States Section, International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) is the primary federal agency responsible for anticipating, investigating, and resolving transboundary technical issues along the United States and Mexico border region in a manner responsive to the needs of the public. The USIBWC will vigorously carry out its statutory responsibilities through binational cooperation and in partnership with other governmental entities. The USIBWC, through the innovative management of its human, physical, and financial resources, will carry out its mission via agency staff members' application of advanced engineering, scientific, diplomatic, and administrative knowledge and skills.*

## Mission Statement

*Our mission is to provide environmentally sensitive, timely, and fiscally responsible boundary and water services, while applying sustainable development principles, along the United States and Mexico border region. We pledge to provide these services in an atmosphere of binational cooperation and in a manner that is responsive to public concerns.*

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## Organizational Values

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The following organizational values represent what the USIBWC will continue to strive for as an operating philosophy. They have been identified by the USIBWC staff as values that are both desired and necessary to achieving the agency's mission. All decisions rendered and actions carried out to achieve the agency's mission are to be in consonance with these values, which will be shared by all personnel regardless of position or rank.

### Performance

- p Sustainment of the USIBWC's role as the primary federal agency responsible for addressing United States - Mexico transboundary technical issues.
- p Responsiveness to the needs of all stakeholders.
- p Innovative approaches to anticipating, investigating, and resolving technical issues.
- p Efficient and effective use of human, physical, and financial resources.

### People

- p Respect for individuals and appreciation for contributions each can make.
- p Cultural diversity embraced as natural and worthwhile.
- p Concern for individuals and their equitable treatment.
- p Equal opportunity for each employee to achieve his or her potential.
- p Communication channels are open, both vertically and laterally.
- p Encouragement of employee innovation and expression of ideas.

### Process

- p Openness and trust in all relationships.
- p Teamwork encouraged and interdependency nurtured.
- p Innovation, creativity, and responsible, calculated risk-taking encouraged.
- p Participative goal setting with decisions made at the lowest practical level.

p Actions consistent with a clearly understood agency vision and mission.

p Recognition for quality achievements.

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## Strategic Goals

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**Introduction.** The following are the broad strategic goals that will give the USIBWC direction in accomplishing its mission. Strategic objectives following each goal provide specific approaches to accomplishing the goal. The strategic goals, by virtue of their design, remain faithful to the USIBWC's unique mission and indeed its name:

<i>International</i>	$\frac{1}{4}$	Transboundary cooperation.....	Strategic Goal 1
<i>Boundary</i>	$\frac{1}{4}$	Boundary preservation.....	Strategic Goal 2
<i>Water</i>	$\frac{1}{4}$	Water resources management.....	Strategic Goal 3
<i>Commission</i>	$\frac{1}{4}$	Agency resources optimization.....	Strategic Goal 4

### Strategic Goal 1 - Transboundary cooperation.

**Provide world class anticipatory and participatory leadership in the prevention and solution of boundary and water issues.**

**Strategic Objective 1-1.** Partner with other entities to carry out border ground water investigations in support of regional sustainable development efforts; do so in a manner that supports and balances the needs of the riparian ecology with the drinking and irrigation water needs of the human population.

**Strategic Objective 1-2.** Partner with other entities in developing and implementing water marketing and water transfer approaches to dealing with water quantity and quality questions.

**Strategic Objective 1-3.** Coordinate the exchange of expertise, technology, and other information within the IBWC and with other entities in a manner that provides a more global approach to the IBWC's international coordination and problem solving role.

**Strategic Objective 1-4.** Cultivate regional and international stakeholder support through proactive internal and external communication and marketing and partner with other entities in problem prevention and resolution.

**Strategic Objective 1-5.** Partner with other entities in international problem prevention and resolution.

## **Strategic Goal 2 - Boundary preservation.**

**Preserve the international land and river boundary in a manner that balances economic, environmental, and sovereignty needs.**

**Strategic Objective 2-1.** Preserve, demarcate, and delineate the land boundary in an effective, innovative, and cost-effective manner that is responsive to stakeholders.

**Strategic Objective 2-2.** Preserve and delineate the river boundary and demarcate it at ports-of-entry in a manner that balances the riparian ecology with human activities and incorporates advanced technology that is cost-effective and responsive to stakeholders.

**Strategic Objective 2-3.** Delineate the land and river boundary on maps in an innovative and cost-effective manner that is responsive to stakeholders and complies with the 1970 Treaty, Article 2, Part C, river mapping requirement.

**Strategic Objective 2-4.** Establish a boundary-wide Global Information System (GIS) to manage agency data.

## **Strategic Goal 3 - Water resources management.**

**Carry out preservation and control, determine national ownership, and improve the quality and utilization of international waters in a manner that accomplishes the following: protects lives and property; supports and balances the needs of the riparian ecology with the water needs of the human population; and supports regional sustainable development.**

**Strategic Objective 3-1.** Apply and renovate flood control activities that incorporate stakeholder input, new tracking and forecasting technology, and a visionary United States - Mexico environmental policy.

**Strategic Objective 3-2.** Renovate water data gathering, exchange, and accounting activities to accomplish more time-sensitive scenarios that incorporate current technology and methodology in support of stakeholder needs.

**Strategic Objective 3-3.** Operate river system structures, utilizing new technology and methodology in concert with other entities in a manner that is responsive to stakeholders

and the riparian ecology.

**Strategic Objective 3-4.** Develop innovative approaches to water quality improvement programs and the solution of border sanitation problems.

**Strategic Objective 3-5.** Carry out bi-national studies and negotiations to reach agreement on the magnitude of the criteria flows and on the technical criteria to judge the acceptability of proposed constructed works within the criteria flow floodplain in both countries as required under Article IV-B of the 1970 Boundary Treaty. Procure the legal and fiscal resources necessary to apply these technical criteria within the criteria flow floodplain in the US in manner that supports both limited development and the maintenance of the riparian habitat.

#### **Strategic Goal 4 - Agency resources optimization.**

**Optimize the acquisition, allocation, and use of agency human, financial, and physical resources for maximum organizational effectiveness.**

**Strategic Objective 4-1.** Value agency human resources through organizational development initiatives, including the development and empowerment personnel and promotion of a quality culture.

**Strategic Objective 4-2.** Analyze and establish priorities for agency programs and initiatives in concert with international and domestic mandates (legal and policy).

**Strategic Objective 4-3.** Align budget, performance, and organization to enhance progress in achieving strategic goals and objectives and ensure accountability to stakeholders.

**Strategic Objective 4-4.** Apply a strategic management approach to the innovative integration and delivery of the agency's engineering, construction, operations and maintenance, foreign affairs, and administrative support functions.

**Strategic Objective 4-5.** Maximize stakeholder participation in existing/future IBWC programs and projects.



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## Stakeholders

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Identification of the USIBWC's stakeholders represents the agency's recognition of their interests, expectations, and role in the mission. Those individuals and entities impacted by, and/or having a vital interest in, the USIBWC's mission include the following:

- p **Public at large**, especially those residing in the border region, which is the ultimate beneficiary of the agency's mission success;
- p **Administration and Congress**, which provide the agency policy guidance and financial resources to carry out the mission;
- p **Mexican Section**, which represents the other component of the International Boundary and Water Commission;
- p **USIBWC employees** at all levels of the organization who carry out the mission;
- p **State, regional, and local governments and non-governmental organizations** interested in transboundary resource management issues; and
- p **Other federal agencies** having an interest in the border region and with whom the USIBWC can form mutually beneficial partnerships.

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## Driving Forces

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**Introduction.** The methodical assessment and continual monitoring of both internal and external forces are necessary due to their direct influence on the achievement of the agency's strategic goals and the USIBWC's mission itself.

### Internal Forces:

1. Background. The USIBWC has undergone an extensive self-examination in the past four years. This is based on the organizational development principle that an organization must first understand itself, including its organizational culture, before aligning its core

values and internal management practices with its strategic goals and objectives. Monitoring of internal forces thus is a fundamental and necessary component of the strategic planning process. Strategic planning is, in essence, the process of envisioning an organization's future and preparing to meet a vision the organization has established for itself. USIBWC employees at all levels were provided the opportunity to participate in a structured assessment of both the agency's *current* organizational culture and the *preferred* culture;

i.e., the organizational culture that employees would prefer to work under and also would facilitate the agency's accomplishment of its vision and mission.

2. Driving forces. The USIBWC's longstanding, tradition-steeped organizational culture is in marked contrast with the culture that both is most desired by the agency staff and one which will enable the agency to become more accountable to stakeholders. The organizational culture which the agency is working toward achieving has the following characteristics: work assignments provide employees opportunities to make meaningful contributions to the agency's mission; management designs work situations that enable employees to enjoy their interaction with co-workers and customers; employees feel they are contributing to a higher goal that is articulated in a clear mission statement; employees are allowed to plan and carry out their work in interdependent work teams, with managers available to provide support and technical assistance as necessary; lines of communication are channeled upward, downward, and laterally; and opportunities are created for personnel to learn and grow on the job.

### **External Forces:**

1. Background. A comprehensive understanding of external forces confronting the agency is necessary in order to monitor the rapid changes taking place in the world and understand their impact on agency operations and its future. An effective monitoring of external forces should help identify not only emerging opportunities and threats, but also the organization's strengths and weaknesses for meeting these opportunities and threats. Monitoring efforts to date include USIBWC and bi-national computerized consensus building sessions and USIBWC executive-level scenario planning exercises.

2. Driving forces. The following major forces have a potential or real effect on the USIBWC's mission accomplishment:

a. transformation of the border economy from primarily an agricultural to a complex agri/industrial one, which impacts directly on population growth in the region, newly emerging potential sources of pollution, increases in existing pollution such as air and water, and a need to improve the border infrastructure;

b. greater importance as a transportation and staging area as a result of increased

trade under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA);

c. increased attention to the region by other federal agencies looking to expand their mission coupled with diverse local, state, and federal planning processes involving a variety of infrastructure needs that call for seamless approaches to binational planning, all of which are compelling the IBWC to move into areas outside of its traditional role (e.g., assuming a leadership role in community development);

d. limited financial resources available to study and resolve major water and sanitation issues and the resultant need to engage in innovative partnerships and alliances with other federal, state, regional, and local governmental and non-governmental entities;

e. major binational water and sanitation issues that are changing the way in which the IBWC performs its duties, responsibilities, and the manner in which it exerts the powers entrusted to it by the two Governments under various boundary and water treaties;

f. increased public awareness of the agency and desire for greater participation in policy formulation; and

g. depletion of available natural resources, such as water supply and its binational implications.

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## Distinctive Competencies

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**Introduction.** Distinctive competencies are those qualities or attributes possessed by the USIBWC and its personnel that distinguish it from other agencies with a similar mission. The following distinctive competencies give the USIBWC its strategic advantage:

- **Reputation.** The agency enjoys a longstanding reputation for its ability to combine skillful diplomatic approaches with innovative engineering practices in resolving highly sensitive binational issues.
- **Authority.** For over a hundred years, the United States and Mexico have relied on the IBWC to apply various boundary and water treaties pertaining to the 2,000 mile U.S. - Mexico boundary and settle differences arising from such application. Through the "Minute" mechanism, the U.S. Section and Mexican Section comprising this international body have significant latitude in applying treaty provisions while obtaining general policy guidance from their respective foreign offices - the

Department of State (U.S.) and the Secretariat of Foreign Relations (Mexico) for decisions requiring joint actions of the two governments. The Commissioner, Principal Engineers, Secretary, and Legal Advisor of each Section are accorded diplomatic status. IBWC personnel are entitled to freedom of movement on IBWC business without immigration and customs restrictions.

- **Bridging Asymmetry.** The IBWC is an instrument of the two governments that is designed to bridge the asymmetry on water and boundary matters brought about by differences in domestic laws, culture, language, and overall expectations on

environmental and natural resource protection. Further, it bridges the differences between a primarily domestic orientation of the water resources agencies of each country, resulting in cooperative actions.

- **Skilled Workforce.** The USIBWC is staffed with professional, technical, and support personnel possessing specialized knowledge and skills, including but not limited to engineering (civil, hydraulic, and environmental), hydrology, foreign affairs, international law, acquisition, human resources, logistics, finance, and operations and maintenance. The USIBWC is a small agency possessing virtually all of the professional skills of most large entities with a similar mission such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation. Such knowledge and skills are required to develop technical solutions to unique transboundary resource problems.

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## Strategic Planning Execution

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**Implementation.** The strategic goals and objectives will be achieved through an implementation process involving agency supervisory and non-supervisory personnel at all levels. A team of such personnel was established for each strategic goal. The strategic goal team, co-led by members of the agency's Executive Leadership Team (ELT), is responsible for researching and drafting specific strategic tactics for achieving the objectives, making recommendations to the Commissioner and ELT members regarding the tactics, and carrying out recommended courses of action. Tactics address the following factors that must be in place to achieve the objective: internal operational processes that must be modified or established; required personnel skills that must be applied or developed; technologies that must be applied or acquired; and required human, physical, and financial resources. Performance goals and requisite measures in each subsequent USIBWC annual performance plan will be based on the strategic goals and

objectives, with a minimum of one performance goal for each strategic goal. Performance goals and measures will be outcome oriented to the greatest extent possible. Accomplishment of the

four strategic goals are predicated on the following factors, some of which may be outside of the USIBWC's span of control: adequate funding of projects through direct congressional appropriations and/or grants from other agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency; sustainment of effective diplomatic relations with Mexico in consideration of a change in administration; and the extent of cooperation of other federal, state, and local entities and non-governmental organizations in addressing transboundary technical issues.

**Linkage.** An effective and timely linkage between the Strategic Plan and the agency's budget process is of critical importance in the agency's effort to develop into a performance-based organization that is accountable to its stakeholders. As such, operational tactics will continue to be developed for each of the strategic objectives and incorporated directly into each fiscal year's performance plan along with outcome-oriented performance measures. The agency's progress in meeting its performance measures will be documented in annual performance reports in compliance with the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. Changes in the agency's budget structure will be in consonance with the Strategic Plan in order to achieve an eventual Strategic Plan/budget alignment.

**Evaluation.** Agency executives prepared for the development of the strategic goals and objectives by undergoing an intensive scenario planning exercise. The scenario planning approach enabled participants to identify methodically a range of possible futures based on emerging and current trends and vividly describe them as best- and worst-case scenarios. Strategic goals and objectives subsequently were drafted in anticipation of these scenarios. Strategic planning program evaluations, or performance audits, will take place in concert with the development of both agency-wide annual performance reports and special evaluations of specific program areas or significant issues. The findings of internal audits and other assessments not under the direct purview of the Strategic Planning Office will be studied in assessing program performance. Inherent in each program evaluation will be a gap analysis in which data generated from the performance audit is studied to assess the gap between the organization's current performance and desired performance as outlined in the Strategic Plan. The annual performance plan will reflect a course of action designed to close the gap. Factors beyond the agency's span of control, including external driving factors, will be taken into consideration when reporting progress in meeting performance measures.

*The USIBWC prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status. The USIBWC is an equal opportunity employer.*

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